

UNCLAS HARARE 002008

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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT PAPER BLAMES OPPOSITION PARTY AND "THE WEST" FOR BOMBING OF RADIO STATION

REF: HARARE 01984

¶1. The government-controlled "Herald" used its August 31 editorial to suggest that the bombing of the "Voice of the People" radio station offices on August 29 was the work of western-sponsored "enemies of Zimbabwe" bent on sulllying the nation's reputation.

¶2. Under the title "Stop smear campaign" the paper comments:

"...The bombing comes in the wake of plans by members of the white Commonwealth at the Earth Summit on WSSD in South Africa to discuss Zimbabwe. There is no doubt that the whole incident has been timed to embarrass the Zimbabwean government, so that the British and their allies have something to discuss and justify their condemnation of Zimbabwe. The ploy is obvious. . . The Americans, the British and the European Union have already ganged up calling on the Earth Summit. . .to condemn President Mugabe. . . They are accusing Zimbabwe of the bombing claiming it is a clear signal that freedom of speech has no place in the country. As Zimbabweans we are not deterred or surprised by these onslaughts by the West. They have a mission to accomplish. The attack on the government before any investigations are concluded shows a high degree of shortsightedness on their part. . . Rushing to conclusions on the radio station's bombing is not justified. . ."

¶3. Under headline "Bombing of radio station predictable: Attack provides Zim's enemies with chance to launch fresh onslaught" the same newspaper carried the following opinion piece political editor Phillip Magwaza:

"As expected, Thursday's bombing of the offices of the illegal private radio station (VOP). . .has provided Zimbabwe's sworn political enemies a golden opportunity to launch a fresh attack on the country. Before the ashes of the explosion had gone cold, Britain and the United States were on cue to condemn the bombing, which they linked to previous attacks on the independent media. . . The cowardly attack was so predictable as it came barely four days before President Mugabe addressed the WSSD in South Africa.

". . .It is only logical to assume that the failure by the British, the Americans and the MDC to put Zimbabwe's land reforms on the agenda of the summit could have had something to do with the bomb attack. . .The recent statement made by the American Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Mr. Walter Kansteiner about working closely with the independent media to topple the government now makes sense. . . It is a shameful act that after Kansteiner's statement, a house belonging to the so-called independent media is bombed. What a coincidence. . ."

SULLIVAN